Article:
Brandist, C. (2018) Considering 'non-capitalist modernities'. Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, 26 (2-3). pp. 277-282. ISSN 2573-9638

https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2018.1511130

Considering ‘non-capitalist modernities’.

Michael David-Fox, Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015) viii + 286pp. Tijana Vujošević, Modernism and the Making of the Soviet New Man (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) xiii + 193pp. Graham H. Roberts (ed.), Material Culture in Russia and the USSR: Things, Values, Indentities (London etc: Bloomsbury, 2017).

These three well-researched and stimulating contributions to the social and cultural history of Russia and the USSR raise a good many important questions and provide valuable material for future work in a range of disciplines. The monographs of Michael David-Fox and Tijana Vujošević both focus on the early USSR as a specific project of modernity. The former focuses on general historiographical questions such as the debates between historians working within (multiple) modernity and neo-traditionalist paradigms, and on the nature of conceptions such as ‘cultural revolution’. The latter has a narrower focus on the role of architecture in the creation of the ‘Soviet new man’. Graham Roberts, on the other hand, has presented a collection of engaging and illuminating essays on various aspects of Russian and Soviet material culture, ranging from the appearance of windows in Russian peasant households in the time of Peter the Great through the Stalinist creation of a compromised consumer culture to the craze for blue jeans in the time of Brezhnev. These quite different projects invite us to reflect on the particular trajectory of Russian and Soviet development in the twentieth century in particular, and to consider the conceptual tools needed to study its various aspects.

Among the biggest problems scholars face when approaching the intellectual history and culture of the Soviet period are the shifting meaning of key terms and concepts that were operative at the time and the ideological framework within which scholarship has developed. In recent years one key category that has come to dominate such history is ‘modernity’, a term that is so encumbered with ideological baggage that it is difficult to remain within the conceptual field it governs without falling prey to a recurrent backshadowing. In many retrospective narratives we often find those features of development leading toward the market economy and its symbiotic socio-cultural practices regarded as ‘modern’, while other features are branded survivals of the pre-modern world. David-Fox begins with an insightful and critical discussion of this practice in recent trends in the historiography of the USSR, focusing on those who viewed modernity as synonymous with the historical trajectory of the West and evaluating the USSR as conforming or diverging from this pattern accordingly. Against this he posits the more recent emergence of the notion of multiple modernities, which the author advocates. The dichotomy is usefully traced back to older trends in Cold-War Sovietology in the United States, roughly gathered around ‘totalitarian’ and ‘revisionist’ trends, which have begun to break down in recent years. David-Fox considers modernity to be ‘incomplete, proceeding in stages, punctuated with crises, in certain ways punctuated with elements from the past, and proceeding at different paces in different areas’ (p.46). In some ways this is reminiscent of Jurgen Habermas’s widely received work on the ‘unfinished project of modernity (1985), but where Habermas implies that the middle class might be incapable of completing the ‘project’, David-Fox seems to be suggesting that neither

Tsarism nor the Stalinist bureaucracy that shared certain continuities with it, was able to do so. But what exactly is modernity for David-Fox? We are given suggestions from a number of works by historians of the USSR (Hoffman, Slezkine, Holquist) but none are fully endorsed since in each case modernity is held to be culturally, or civilizationally specific. We are left with a cluster of notions, and it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise. The USSR, according to David-Fox, was a non-capitalist kind of modernity. The criterion of capitalist modernity appears to be the market economy, while in the USSR an 'intelligentsia-statist modernity' took root. David-Fox sees two stages in its development: a party-state dualism predominates in the 1920s, which effectively collapsed in 1929 as the Party effectively annexed relatively autonomous state institutions.

While this way of approaching the development of the Soviet state across the threshold of the so-called 'great break' in 1929 proves extremely fruitful, it is less clear that it is sufficient to sustain a coherent account of the resulting Soviet state as a 'non-capitalist modernity'. The problem is that 'actually existing capitalism' was never the market system of laissez-faire ideologies, and the Keynsian economic policies adopted across the world in the wake of the Great Depression complicates any such binary opposition. It is probably more accurate to view the USSR and USA as occupying the two ends of a continuum of states where state intervention in the economy was the norm. Indeed, state control of significant sections of the economy was so pervasive throughout the era of the Cold War that all such dichotomies need at least some nuancing.

One of the advantages of David-Fox's approach is that, following Stephen Kotkin's writings on Stalinism, it foregrounds the USSR's inescapable integration into a system of competing states. Stalinism was thus not simply the reassertion of autocratic practices or the unfolding of progressivist dogmas but a response to the pressures of other states. The USSR, like all states, was compelled to 'attain modernity as well, or suffer the consequences, including defeat in war and possible colonial conquest' (p,31). World War One and foreign interventions in the Civil War provided dramatic lessons in this area. 'Modernity' now becomes a 'geopolitical process', that is 'a matter of acquiring what it took to join the great powers, or fall victim to them' (p.31). Here Fredric Jameson's suggestion that we adopt the 'experimental procedure of substituting capitalism for modernity in all the contexts in which the latter appears' and see what changes (2012: 215) may be considered pertinent. Might capitalism have undergone a number of paths of development in the twentieth century, which were quite different in societies with and without a sizeable urban bourgeoisie? To what extent did the 'great break' mark the subordination of Soviet society to international competition? There is no consideration of these questions here, which is rather odd since the pressures under consideration are surely manifestations of what Lenin, Bukharin and others defined as imperialism. Indeed, there is a conspicuous absence of any sustained consideration of Marxist scholarship on the USSR, even though what seems to be reasserting itself here is the analytical imperative to address questions central to Marxism but which had been repressed in much recent history.

In a number of places we can see formulations distinctly reminiscent of Marxist historiography but without any reference to the Marxist originals. Among these might be the Kautsky-Lenin proposition that the further East one goes in Europe the weaker

and more cowardly the bourgeoisie, requiring the proletariat to fulfill the historic tasks of the bourgeoisie. Especially pertinent might be Trotsky's remarkable writings on the peculiarities of Russia's historical development in conditioning its subsequent trajectory. The former was the foundation of the project of proletarian hegemony, which Grigorii Zinoviev (1973 [1922]: 61) called the 'the basic ideological foundation of Bolshevism': in Russian conditions historical tasks of the bourgeois revolution falls to the proletariat, which must exert leadership over the peasantry. In the latter the dialectic of 'modernity' and 'neo-traditionalism' is encapsulated in the notion of combined and uneven development whereby all concrete historical developments occurring under the external, standardizing pressures of international capital, exhibit historical and geographical particularities. Then there is the more recent critical, anti-Stalinist Marxist scholarship about the USSR, which presents the first five-year plan as the violent consolidation of the rule of a party-state bureaucracy born during the Civil War (for an overview see van der Linden 2007). This bureaucracy substituted itself for private capitalists and subordinated economy and society to capital accumulation in order to compete militarily. The essential dynamic of the capitalist mode of production was, according to this formulation, internalized by the Stalinist system in a historically specific fashion. Unfortunately David-Fox also has limited acquaintance with recent scholarship on Marx's complex and contested oeuvre (particularly as revealed in the ongoing publication of the Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe). This can be seen from the narrow characterization of Marx's scattered, intuitive and developing treatment of ideology. A good proportion of the 'multiple faces of ideology' (p. 102) that David-Fox explores in relation to the USSR appear in Marx's exploratory writings, for while Marx used the term 'ideology' in a number of ways he never settled on a single definition, let alone develop a unified theory.

While the notion of 'multiple modernities' accommodates analysis of these features and mitigates the one-sided approaches of 'modernity' versus 'neo-traditionalist' historians, it nevertheless tends, one-sidedly, to encourage narratives of continuity across crucial historical thresholds. Thus David-Fox convincingly detects continuities between the Vperedist conception of 'cultural revolution' between the 1905 and 1917 revolutions and that employed by the Stalin regime at the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s. The radical discontinuities between these historically articulated and implemented programmes, which are no less significant, are much less prominent in the analysis here, however. This may be the unfortunate legacy of the genealogical intellectual history that has become 'common sense' in much historical scholarship. As Edward Said noted about perhaps the most influential exponent of genealogical history, there is 'a sensible difference …between Logos and words: we must not let Foucault get away with confusing them with each other, nor with letting us forget that history does not get made without work, intention, resistance, effort, or conflict, and that none of these things is silently absorbable into micronetworks of power' (1983, p. 245).

David-Fox's discussions of various aspects of Soviet history are, nevertheless, rather more sensitive to these discontinuities than Tijana Vujošević's discussion of modernism and the formation of the 'New Soviet Man'. Adopting key assumptions from poststructuralism, Vujošević discusses the ways in which the terms of the Soviet discourse defined the individual and shaped a new subjectivity. The fact that avant-garde modernists continued to work into the Stalinist 1930s and the Soviet cultural

project involved a dramatic transformation of the physical environment signifies, for Vujošević, that a 'simple dichotomy between noble dream and dismal reality' becomes untenable (p.2). Legitimate though this might be, instead of investigating the various and changing modalities of engagement, shifting relations between artists, architects and the state, the struggles involved, dialogues, polemics and repressions, we are presented with an avant-garde all too 'silently absorbable into micronetworks of power'. Foucault's massively inflated and undertheorised notion of discourse here subsumes all agency, with the 'Soviet new man' a mere position within formative structures.

Some of the works and ideas discussed, in interesting ways, by Vujošević, would be worth considering as precursors, and perhaps even ancestors, of the very social constructivist, and even poststructuralist, approaches applied in this study. Arch Soviet exponent of Taylorism, Aleksei Gastev, for instance, sought precisely to refashion the worker by absorbing him or her silently into the formative structures of mass production. The physical environment, supplemented by cultural engineering, would give order and direction to social experience, providing the regulative norms of social behaviour. While Gastev is among those considered in provocative and engaging ways here, equally important factors are relegated to the background, or overlooked completely. There was massive opposition to such perspectives among those who had a very different conception of proletarian culture such as Aleksandr Bogdanov (here considered only as author of the science fiction novel Red Star) and Commissar of Enlightenment Anatoli Lunacharskii, and the alternative model of the 'scientific organization of labour' proposed by Liga Vremia (Time League). The ascendency of Gastev's ideas, and the influence they exerted, was the result of a number of struggles and defeats of counter-trends that were increasingly out of synch with the bureaucratic drift of the state. Moreover, the fact that the avant-garde itself encompassed a range of different trends engaged in almost constant struggle, and that only certain figures were able to make a successful transition in harmony with the policies of the 1930s, suggests that the narrative of continuity presented here is rather too categorical. Nevertheless, the material about the various dimensions of the emergent Stalinist cultural project that Vujošević adduces provides valuable points of reference for historians of the period, while the commentary has plenty of insight.

Roberts's volume of essays provides some helpful correctives, or at least some important contextual material, for understanding the complex relationship between cultural phenomena and socio-political developments in Russia and the USSR. One such important contribution is Marjorie L. Hilton's article on Vladimir Mayakovsky and Aleksandr Rodchenko's innovative collaborations in the birth of NEP-era Soviet advertising. These two champions of the avant-garde and the Revolution sought to undermine the ideology of commercialism even while they developed a language of advertising that would have an influence across the world. Rather than appealing to subconscious desires and engaging in emotional manipulation in the spirit of Freud's nephew and founder of the US Pubic Relations industry, Edward Bernays, Mayakovsky and Rodchenko sought to promote goods on the basis of their use value for individuals and society. An ironic attitude, even satirical swipes at Western commercialism was pervasive here, such as in their famous image of a geometric caricature-baby promoting the use of mass-produced pacifiers for infants that one can 'suck into old age'. While apparently bizarre, the campaign was launched in order to combat the widespread and unhygienic practice of giving babies chewed food in a

cloth to pacify them. At this time the proportion of resources going into the production of consumer goods rather than means of production was the reverse of that which prevailed with the launch of the first Five-Year Plan, meaning there was actually some basis for claiming an alternative, non-capitalist modernity was indeed possible, if only in embryonic form.

Amy E. Randall provides a provocative discussion of the parallel emergence of the idea of a Soviet 'citizen-consumer' with those in the United States, China struggling for independence and Nazi Germany. While the production of Soviet consumer goods was depressed by the uncommonly large proportion of capital investment going into heavy industry in the Stalin period and after, an ideology of consumerism as a civic responsibility was nevertheless already developing in the 1930s, coming to the fore after World War 2. The parallel with the construction of the active consumer United States during the Great Depression, when the mass of the population had little real access to goods beyond basic necessities, is particularly instructive. Indeed the constant diversions to the other cases, which are interesting n themselves, often seems a distraction. The promise of consumer plenty becomes a compensation for the removal of the citizen from any control over production and the effective running of the state. Unfortunately the overly schematic nature of the article allows no room for consideration of the formation and role of public relations (formerly the propaganda industry), developed by Bernays and theorized by Harold Lasswell and others in the formation of consumer culture. Comparison with Soviet consumer propaganda of the period and the Soviet new man as a consumer would likely have problematized the communism/capitalism dichotomy that still runs throughout much historical writing.

The importance of the domestic sphere in the from the end of the Stalin period to the collapse of the USSR is the focus of Anna Alekseyeva's contribution, revealing the shifting relationship between commercialism and social policy over the period in question. A comparative perspective on the extent of state intervention in the domestic sphere in the USSR and beyond would have been valuable here, given the international trends towards the construction of social housing projects across Europe in the 1960s and their decline in the 1970s and 1980s. In the absence of such consideration it often becomes difficult to ascertain the specificity of the Soviet case. No such comparison is, however, required in Emilia Koutsova's poignant discussion of the importance of material culture for the many Soviet citizens who found themselves in internal exile in the Stalin period or Olga Boitsova's discussion of the way in which photographs are displayed in homes in contemporary Russia. These works illustrate the scope for the study of material culture in Russia remains considerable.

Two other articles in the thematic group dealing with consumer culture focus on the later Soviet period, when the period of détente led to an increased access among Russians for western symbolic goods. Blue jeans (Natalia Chernyshova) and popular music (Sergei Zhuk) were particularly valued. International travel coincided with the decline of the Soviet consumer market, and so western visitors to the USSR were always surprised by the number of people who wanted to purchase their denims, which officialdom often associated with moral degeneration or even criminality. The thriving black market in such goods in the 1970s undoubtedly contributed to this, but as state imports increased the acceptability rose and the mystique gradually declined. The same applied to imports of Western popular music, here explored through

interesting Ukrainian material, which shows the extent to which such trends went beyond the more fashionable capitals of Moscow and Leningrad. Zhuk relates the ways in which official Komsomol discotheques and a black market in western rock music coexisted in the 1970s before converging and in some cases fusing together in the 1980s as well-placed young Communists took advantage of the move toward the market that originated within the Communist Party itself. The essays in Roberts's volume thus provide valuable materials that significantly complicate received ideas of the USSR and modernity, even if the implications are not fully spelled out.

These books, then, constitute substantial contributions to the developing literature on the distinctive pattern of social and cultural development in the USSR. As we peruse these pages, apart from the immediate post-Revolutionary period and its Stalinist curtailment, the USSR appears distinctive rather than exceptional. Though ideologically embellished in a number of specific ways, we see very recognizable practices operating in the USSR, consideration of which should lead historians further away from the closed perspectives of the dominant historiography of the past. Indeed, it becomes ever clearer that while it maintained a closed market against the encroachment of western capital, the USSR was open to and exerted a great deal of international influence. David-Fox's study ends with discussion of the international contacts between the USSR and western intellectuals in Stalin's time, which could surely be expanded in the areas covered by the other work under consideration here, and its wider chronological parameters. The international circulation of specialists in 'scientific management', for instance, pervades the entire Soviet period, with only brief interruptions. By the early 1960s several prominent western thinkers as different as Herbert Marcuse (1964) and J.K. Galbraith (1967) were openly discussing the apparent convergence of Western capitalism and the Soviet system. Such convergence was limited by the realities of military competition, but the final shift to the market system came from within the Communist Party itself, with the major structures of institutional power surviving the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Set within this wider perspective the works discussed here provide some valuable material for scholars working in this area today.

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